

WASHINGTON – U.S. Congressman Allen Boyd (D-North Florida) announced today that the Social Security Administration will open a new hearing office in Tallahassee. The new facility will better serve North Florida residents by processing and evaluating claims more quickly.

“It is unacceptable that people with legitimate disability claims have had to wait years in order to receive a decision on their request for benefits,” said Congressman Boyd. “The people of North Florida deserve better, and I am grateful that this new Tallahassee hearing office will bring much needed relief to our communities. The new office will help reduce the backlog of hearings, allow for more efficient and expeditious adjudication of claims, and decrease the average processing time. This is great news for people living in the second congressional district, and I am extremely glad to have played a part in bringing this facility to our area.”

“The opening of the Tallahassee hearing office will significantly improve service to North Florida residents with disabilities,” said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security. “Since becoming Commissioner, I have made reducing the backlog of disability cases my top priority. The added capacity of this hearing office, combined with the recent opening of hearing offices in Ft. Myers and St. Petersburg, will allow us to further reduce processing times and puts us on track to our goal of making hearing decisions for Florida residents in an average of 270 days.”

Presently, the average wait time is about 16 months, with nearly 7000 cases currently backlogged and only 13 judges handling of cases. Of the 13 Administrative Law Judges at the Jacksonville office, only a few travel to Tallahassee or Panama City to hear cases, making the wait time for many North Floridians living in the second congressional district even longer.

Congressman Boyd has been a strong advocate for placing a facility in our region. He has had numerous conversations and sent several letters to the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, arguing for a new office to be based in North Florida. Through his position on the Appropriations Committee, Boyd successfully fought to appropriate funds in the Social Security Administration’s budget to establish a new hearing office in Tallahassee.

The new hearing office will open in August 2010 and be temporarily housed on the second floor of the Oakland Building located at 2002 St. Augustine Road, Tallahassee, Florida, until the permanent site is completed. The permanent office will be located at 1961 Quail Grove Lane, Tallahassee, and is expected to be ready in November 2011.

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